Preparing a Staff for Major Change

By Rushton Hurley

This was a discussion about a school that went to a one-to-one bring your own device initiative, went to google docs, and also block scheduling. He talked with the audience on what it means to help staff get through big changes in things, especially in regards to technology. After experiencing the change at the school he was talking about, they then polled the staff about what they thought, and the staff were all positive about this. The students also really liked the change.

How did they bring that big change into the school and have it work? One of the things that worked possibly was that doing all those things all at once may have helped. Rather than having 3 years of big change, you had it all at once, which made them come together saying we may as well unite because we are going through it together. They also decided to see how different schools handled different devices that they chose to test it for them. Another piece is that they took their time. They eased into the big change. They also heavily involved their teachers in each possibility within each change.

When they heavily involved the teachers, they had a strong majority in the school. These are the people who are going to lead it because they are dealing with the change on a daily basis. He recommended that you recognize that every school has room for improvement, and stating this to your staff. He suggested that you work to figure out what the good things and bad things are to that change. He also talked about that the administration needs to be the one leading the charge and being able to speak to the strengths and weakness and answering “what will the change allow to happen” and “what does NOT making the change preserve”. I think this is a very important to look at the good of keeping it the same and the change, as there are some things you could change and tweek, but some things you want to keep for the future still. He really iterated how the ball gets dropped after they researched the questions, and they never talk about it at the end.

He talked then about looking at the setting that the technology would be in, and what you will want/need the device to do. You really have to look at it being about the learning and getting the kids engaged in the learning. What will the device allow? Another piece he discussed was that you need to recognize that you would need training. This was a piece I feel that Sioux Falls dropped the ball on, because they only did it once, heavily, right at the beginning, and it wasn’t very specific. They have just let us go and not provide us with more, newer training.

He continued on with making sure that you have a clear reason on why you made the choice. This way you have the parents and community on board with whatever it is with what you are doing. One thing he talked about was edsurge, which is a place where people discuss and talk about ideas for teaching and learning. Another piece is having people actually try it before they buy it.

He discussed that for everyone to be on board, they needed to be ready to listen, ready to ask questions, and ready to explore whatever path you are going to go on good or bad. I liked how he really talked about the people who will always resist everything. You will also have people who will leap on any given fad. In order to have something work, then your leadership needs to be trusted and not go one of the two extremes. This trust can only be earned from the team.

Ultimately the success is due to people who are willing to listen to each other and explore the possibilities that are out there. I think that until you get people willing to listen and actually listen, and not just to pretend like they are listening, it will be hard to change things.